

# agenda

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July-August 1959.

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With the sixth issue of "Agenda" it is time for a consideration of the aims of the publication and what has so far been done.

We are intended as a means of communication and to keep certain basic ideas in circulation.

There will be a Poetry Issue every few months. By implied criticism, we hope to show that better poetry is being written than would be supposed from current literary periodicals.

We have not yet become sufficiently a forum for intelligent discussion among those who are thinking actively at the present time. There has been too much general statement along lines which either our readers are too familiar with for anything new to be achieved, or the opposite, which has meant a failure of communication.

The use of a publication of this size is to circulate ideas which are unlikely to get printed elsewhere, to form a group, to collect news and to indicate where active thinking is taking place.

Noel Stock once remarked to the editor that little could be accomplished until we all withdrew and studied something definite; we hope in "Agenda" to indicate lines along which vital study can be pursued.

Underlying all this we are trying to keep curiosity alive, without which there can be no art or literature.

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## TWO PRINCIPLES OF EDUCATION

### I.

The Boston Society of Natural History issued in 1894 a booklet of *Thirty Six Observation Lessons on Common Minerals*: "The aims . . . are . . . to give pupils, who are walking through the ordinary grammar school curriculum by faith, one opportunity to walk by sight; to give them one opportunity to get information at first hand. . .

"... they should get at the concrete right away and deal with the abstract later . . . and when they know something about minerals a formal definition will have some meaning for them, and they will be better prepared to distinguish the natural kingdoms from each other. Their first work is to learn to use their eyes, to recognise, simple relations in a limited field, and to make correct records. . ."

L. R. Lind, *Latin Poetry in Verse Translation* (Houghton Mifflin, 1957) says in his introduction: "Latin poetry was used to express the facts of some branch of learning or information."

## II.

*Writers Adviser for Freshman Composition* (American Book Co., 1952), under pretence of offering a sample of punctuation errors, deftly twists some recent history:

"Success in business offers no guarantee of success in statesmanship: Chamberlain, the business man, carried his country to the brink of catastrophe from which Churchill, the artist, saved it."

As an example of errors in 'mechanics', it publishes this poisonous little piece:

" 'The United States and the Near East', published by the Harvard University Press in 1946, confirmed his position as an authority on international politics."

As an example of 'wordiness':

"It is unfortunate that so rich a state can't appropriate money so that there are more schools."

Keynes is quoted repeatedly, also Mortimer Adler, and on p. 198, by way of exemplifying 'exposition', there is a full scale argument for handing over national sovereignty to the U.N. All the way through, one is reminded of the old shell-game: which is right, eight and eight is fifteen, or eight and eight are fifteen?

In *Word Resources*, Frieda Radke, (Odyssey Press, 1953) "things fall apart" and we are left with a sort of disembodied acceleration:

"The ability to read rapidly is of great value to everyone but especially to a student. It enables him to read . . . more daily newspapers and current magazines than he could otherwise find time for in a crowded schedule."

J. V.

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Even the Victorian era with its formula: Greece for the arts, Rome for law, the Hebrews for religion was trying to preserve elements, the main elements of different cultures, not, à la UNESCO, trying to melt out all distinctions and reduce the whole to a dull paste of common inhumanity. (? and/or nucleosity.)

E. P.

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The extract on "Printing Press Money" (Agenda 5) is a rare specimen which needs exact labelling under the category of Obscurantism. It may be a deliberate piece of ambiguity, a joke, or the pronouncement of an innocent man, but the formal and official category is Obscurantism.

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Attention of Agenda Readers is drawn to the increasing amount of information now appearing in the "American Mercury" (Subscription: 5 dollars to 250 W. 57th St., New York 19) and in the "United States News and World Report" (despite one contributor who needs more careful watching than Gerhart Eisler). Subscription 8 dollars to 450 Parker Avenue, Dayton 1, Ohio.

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#### ANOTHER REASON FOR GETTING GREEK OUT OF UNIVERSITY CURRICULA

"The Carthaginians use leather marked with a seal for money, and the man with the most of these is richest. The Lacedaemonians use a weight of iron of no worth, and in Aethiopia they use hollow stones. The house of Pulytinus would count for little worth with a Scythian nomad. So wealth differs and different people have various standards. Houses are useless to Scythians, the skin cloak is useful. We cannot use Cthaginian money as we do silver, so it is useless to us. . .

"If we can satisfy the body without gold and silver—which we do not use for the body like food, drink and clothes, then they would not be useful for that purpose. And if not useful they would not be wealth!

"Medicine is only useful to a person who knows how to use it. The same with gold and silver. Now we agreed that an honourable man alone knows how to use these, so that they would only be useful to him or wealth to him . . . the man who had food etc. would not require gold and silver for his bodily needs."

From Eryxias, among the Spuria of Plato.  
H. S.

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#### SOVEREIGNTY

"Heads of central banks in Europe worked out agreements for stabilizing currencies in greatest secrecy, with only the heads of government in each case being informed of the agreements reached." *United States News and World Report* (January 9, 1959.) For details of the agreements see *Candour* of January 16th.

#### CURRENT HISTORY

Anybody interested in the history of our time, particularly the political errors of the past twenty years which have brought about the world we now live in, will suffer gladly any inconvenience encountered in obtaining a copy of Luigi Villari's new and extremely useful volume *The Liberation of Italy*, published by the small American firm of C. C. Nelson at Appleton, Wisconsin.

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Politics : the watering down of ideas.

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It is difficult to swallow the view that the ignorance of any ruling class, group, or coterie, both natural and augmented, as it is now by a definite need to increase ignorance, can conduce to the general welfare.

Manlio Dazzi publishes thirty brief poems of Giuseppe Marchiori, possibly his entire output since 1932. Justification :

CA' DOLFIN

No so chi t'abbia fato nè par chi

Vila o palasso vecia cà Dolfin

Ma fra i to muri e i viali del giardin

Chi t'à fato pensava certo a mi. 1932.

Against the Venetian dialect which anyone knowing Italian can understand, the elder Schweiwiller has collected twenty two pages of Milanese proverbs, partly incomprehensible save locally or to students.

In bôcca ciusa ghe vâ minga denter môsch.

There is a dictionary Milanese-Italiano.

It will be time enough to be polite to De Gaulle when Pétain goes to Les Invalides.

Subscription : 12 issues : 5/- (including postage.)  
in U.S.A. \$1. " "

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